

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

April 2, 2008

The Honorable Michael Griffin  
Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
300 E Street, SW, Suite 9L33  
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Griffin:

I write to you regarding the Space Shuttle to Constellation Program Workforce Transition report which was provided to Congress yesterday. In particular, I am focused on the impact of this transition on the 1,900 National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employees at the Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans East. As you well know, Michoud and its employees weathered Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent Federal levee breaks, rebuilding the facility with the help of NASA and the Congress. With the report yesterday however, it seems that another storm lies on the horizon for Michoud. While I know that you and your team are focused on this issue, as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I would like to request your continued cooperation to help mitigate significant workforce disruptions at our Michoud facility.

Since 1961, Michoud has been supporting the U.S. Space Program. For example, parts of the enormous Saturn rockets were manufactured at Michoud. On July 6, 1979, Michoud manufactured and delivered the first external tank for the first flight of the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1981. Michoud has continued its important role in the Space Program to this day – due to the hard work of the 1,900 NASA employees and additional contractors it employs. I understand that Michoud will also have a critical role in the Constellation Program, manufacturing major pieces of the Orion crew capsule as well as stages of the Ares I and Ares V launch vehicles. However, while these projects will generate employment, NASA has estimated that there is the potential for a loss of 1,300 jobs at Michoud over the next five years.

As NASA plans for the transition to the Constellation Program, I would like to highlight a couple of key areas which I believe could help provide “bridge” employment. In particular, as you have indicated, although NASA will be staffing down at Michoud, there may be opportunities to retain employment there through interim NASA operations at the facility. Also, in the FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, I worked closely with the leadership on the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee to provide NASA facilities, including Michoud, new enhanced-use lease authority which begins December 31, 2008. At Michoud, this expanded authority could allow the facility to expand its tenant base, which currently includes the Coast Guard and U.S. Department

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of Agriculture. Lastly, Michoud sits on 830 plus acres of land and certainly has a lot of room for future expansion. I understand that the State of Louisiana is investing \$102 million in a new building onsite and sophisticated manufacturing equipment to enhance the competitiveness of Michoud. I would like to work with NASA and Governor Jindal to provide necessary resources to recruit additional industry which could serve as "bridge" employment until the Ares program ramps up.

Given the enormous impact of this workforce transition on the Michoud Assembly Facility, I would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the possible impact of these particular proposals as well as your ongoing work on this matter. I respectfully request a meeting no later than April 18, 2008 if possible. This is to ensure there is sufficient time, if needed, to work with you, the State of Louisiana and my Senate colleagues through the FY09 Appropriations process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu  
United States Senator

MLL:brv

cc: The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
The Honorable Bobby Jindal